



# HOME OWNER'S GUIDE TO WELL CONSTRUCTION

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## Introduction

This fact sheet will provide you with helpful information in planning the construction of your well. State law requires that all wells meet certain minimum standards for construction. These standards are outlined in the Department of Ecology's publication, *Minimum Standards for Construction and Maintenance of Wells*. You and your well driller share the responsibility to ensure that the well on your property is constructed to these standards.

Please read through all of this information. If you have questions, contact the Department of Ecology (Ecology) well drilling coordinator for your area. The phone numbers are listed on an insert accompanying this publication.

## Plan ahead

You do not need a water right if you will use less than 5,000 gallons per day for domestic or industrial supplies and will irrigate less than half an acre of lawn or non-commercial garden. If you will be using more than 5,000 gallons per day or want to irrigate a larger area, contact the Ecology's Water Resources Program Regional Office for your area to obtain information on applying for a water right. (see insert)

Ordinarily, water for a single domestic dwelling, to include some stock and irrigation of one-half acre of non-commercial garden, would not exceed the 5,000 gallon a day limitation.

Research the area in which the well is to be constructed. Well log data can be obtained from your neighbors, local well contractors, county health offices, and Ecology's website (see insert). Such valuable data as size, depth, capacity, and location of these wells are often available. One must realize, however, that there is no guarantee that the well contractor will find water based on this data. The complexities of the geology in a given area may be such that groundwater may not be available on your property even though a neighbor's well may be close to your proposed well site.

## Location of the well

Always locate the well on high or well drained ground and observe the prescribed distances from septic tanks, privies, stockyards, and other sources of contamination (at least 100 feet). Contact your county health offices and/or county planning departments to check for any additional county regulations or ordinances. Public water supplies (serving two or more homes) must have prior approval by local or state health officials (refer to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-160-205, available at your public library).

## Selection of a water well contractor

Only a duly licensed well contractor is permitted to construct wells in the state of Washington. The license must be issued by Ecology. A general contractor's registration and insurance bond with the Department of Labor and Industries is also necessary for the construction of wells.

To verify Washington State well driller licenses please contact: Department of Ecology, Well Driller Licensing Coordinator or the Ecology Well Driller Coordinator (see insert).

**Step 1. Consult the following sources for the names of local well drilling companies:**

- Classified section of telephone directory
- Well equipment suppliers
- Well owners in your neighborhood (see well reports in online data base—see insert for web address)
- Department of Ecology, Headquarters or Regional Offices for verification of Washington State Well Drilling licenses (Addresses/phone numbers on back page)

**Step 2. Seek information on well contractors as follows:**

- Reputation
- Reliability
- Competence
- Experience
- Current license
  - Up-to-date well drilling license
  - Registered and bonded through the Department of Labor and Industries
- To verify enforcement actions (if any) issued against specific well drillers, please contact the Regional Office of the Department of Ecology in your area. (Addresses/phone numbers on back page)

**Step 3. Consult with well contractors on the following:**

- A written contract for mutual protection
- Insurance protection
- Construction of well to include:
  1. Size of hole.
  2. Casing diameters including reduction.
  3. Casing quality and type.
  4. Screening and perforation requirements, if any (also called well development).
  5. Sealing requirements under state codes (WAC 173-160-075).
  6. Water quality and water production tests.
  7. Filing a certified copy of well log for the owner.
    - a) Water well logs are filed at the Department of Ecology's Regional Offices.
    - b) Well logs are filed by County, Section, Township and Range. Please have this information before contacting the appropriate office.
    - c) Well Drillers are required to **file well logs** with the Department of Ecology **30 days after completion of the well.**
  8. A Department of Ecology well identification tag.
    - a) Well drillers are required to attach a well identification tag and record the well identification number on the well log.
    - b) The tag should be attached in a reasonably permanent fashion.
  9. Guarantee of materials and workmanship
  10. Estimated depth of well to be cased.
  11. Estimated total depth of well.

**Step 4. Require that the prospective well contractor itemizes an estimate of costs to include the following:**

- Cost per foot of drilling.

- Cost per foot of casing.
- Cost of sealing materials and labor involved.
- Cost of other materials (drive shoe, screen, perforated casing, etc.).
- Cost of well development (including bailer test when appropriate).
- Cost of pump test on wells drilled under water right permit (required by regulations).
- Cost of pump installation, riser pipe, control box, wiring and wellcap, if appropriate.

#### **Step 5. Pay fee.**

A fee is charged for construction of water wells and is to be paid by the property owner when the notification form (see below) is sent in. Ecology uses these fees to support inspections of wells. The fee for construction of a new water well with a minimum top casing diameter:

- Of **less** than twelve (12) inches is **\$100**.
- Twelve (12) inches or **greater** is **\$200**.

#### **Pay to:**

Department of Ecology  
Fiscal Office  
P.O. Box 5128  
Lacey, WA 98509-5128

### **Important information about property owner responsibilities**

The property owner must submit a **notification** form to Ecology at least **72 hours prior to well construction** along with the fee mentioned above. Notification forms are available through Ecology's Regional Offices, licensed well drillers, and county building departments. The forms can be filled out by the property owner or the driller. It is also the responsibility of the property owner to decommission any well that is abandoned, unusable, not intended for future use, or that poses an environmental, safety, or public health hazard.

### **Pump Installation**

When selecting pump and water system equipment be sure to:

- Select a proper pump and water system adaptable to your present and future needs.
- Properly house and protect your pump and equipment.
- Arrange to have your pump equipment serviced periodically.

NOTE: If your pump installer disturbs the surface seal when installing the pump, it is their responsibility to re-install and fix this surface seal. **This is very important** as contaminants can enter your well if the seal is broken.

### **Delegation**

As of 1992, counties or local health districts may have received authority to inspect well seals and the decommissioning aspects of the drilling regulations. **Prior to having your well constructed, check with your county environmental health department to get any additional information on local well construction ordinances.**

## Do's and don'ts

- ✓ *Do* obtain a water-right permit prior to construction if you intend to withdraw more than 5,000 gallons a day or irrigate more than 1/2 acre of non-commercial lawn or garden from a well (estimate your needs.)
- ✓ *Do* consider your neighbors' present well location, septic system location, and other potential contaminants in locating your own.
- ✓ *Do* make certain that you and the water well contractor fully understand the terms of your written contract.
- ✓ *Do* locate your well, giving primary consideration to sanitation requirements.
- ✓ *Do* select a proper pump and water system adaptable to your present and future needs.
- ✓ *Do* have your well water analyzed to determine bacterial and mineral content.
- ✓ *Do* properly house and protect your pump and other equipment.
- ✓ *Do* arrange to have your pump equipment serviced periodically.
- ✓ *Do* make sure that the driller files a copy of the well report with the appropriate office of the Department of Ecology.
- ✓ *Do* obtain a certified copy of the well report on your completed well, including a bill of materials and record of work performed.
- ✓ *Do* make sure your driller seals the well.
- ✓ *Do* decommission any well that is abandoned, unusable, not intended for future use, or that poses an environmental, safety, or public health hazard.
- ✓ *Do* make sure your driller attaches a Department of Ecology **well identification tag** to your well.
- ✓ *Do* remember that conservation means using what you have more efficiently. Conservation can be a great tool for the individual well owner to use to save money and benefit the environment.
- ✓ *Don't* hire an **unlicensed** driller.
- ✓ *Don't* ask a driller to construct a well that will not meet state standards. (You would be subject to probable future costs to remedy the deficiencies that result from improperly constructed wells, and the driller's license would be in jeopardy.)
- ✓ *Don't* purchase your pump prior to well construction.
- ✓ *Don't* store pesticides, fuels, or other chemicals in your well house or near your well.

## Wellhead protection

If your well will serve 15 or more connections or 25 people, contact the Washington Department of Health's Wellhead Protection Program at (360) 586-9041 for information on how to protect your wellhead from contamination.

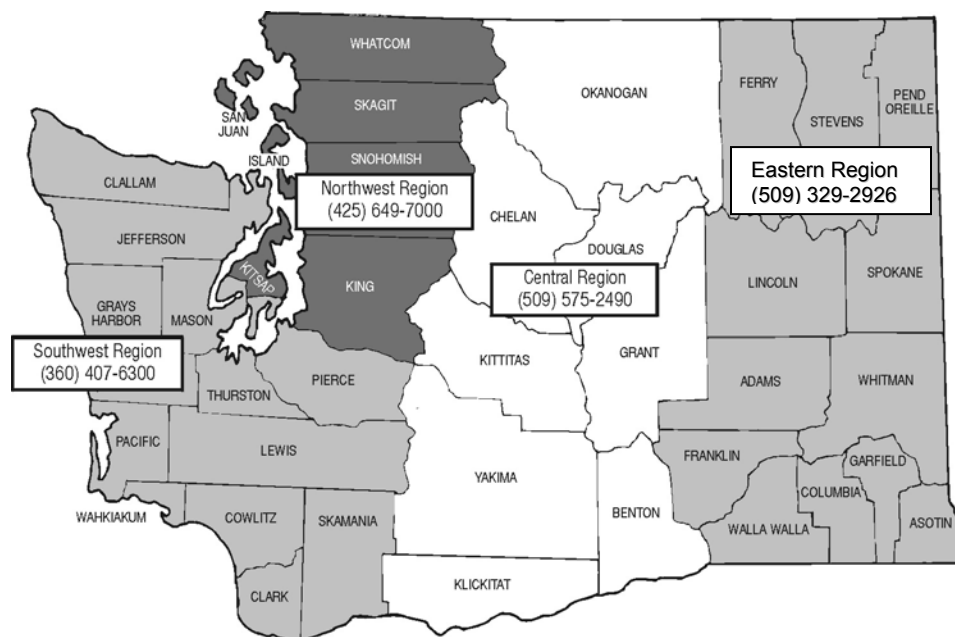
If your well serves 2 to 15 homes, contact your county health department for information regarding citing standards associated with the size of the well.

*If you have special accommodation needs or require this publication in alternative format, please contact 407-6607 (voice) or 711 (TTY) or 1-800-833-6388 (TTY).*

## **Well Contacts:**

Below is a map of the state of Washington, with the outlines of the four Ecology Regional Offices. Prior to drilling your well, contact the appropriate **Ecology** staff listed below, as well as the **county** environmental health department for additional regulations. The counties that are shaded on the map below, have been authorized to administer and enforce the well drilling standards that pertain to sealing, decommissioning, and well tagging.

*If you have special accommodation needs or require this publication in alternative format, please contact 407-6607 (voice) or 711 (TTY) or 1-800-833-6388 (TTY).*



## **Department of Ecology Addresses:**

### **Water Resources Program**

(360) 407-6000

#### **Headquarters Office**

P.O. Box 47600

Olympia, Washington 98504-7600

#### Well Construction and Identification

Dick Szymarek

(360) 407-6648

#### Well Driller Licensing/Testing

Marian Bruner

(360) 407-6650

### **Northwest Regional Office**

(206) 649-7000

3190 - 160th Avenue SE

(TDD) (206) 649-4259

Bellevue, Washington 98008-5452

#### Well Drilling Coordinator

Ken White

(425) 649-7044

#### Water Rights Coordinator

Dorothy Glenn

(425) 649-7278

**Southwest Regional Office**

(360) 407-6300

510 Desmond Drive

Olympia, Washington 98504-7775

P.O. Box 47600

Olympia, Washington 98504-7600

Well Drilling Coordinator

Igor Vern

(360) 407-0281

Water Rights Coordinator

Sheri Carroll

(360) 407-0240

**Central Regional Office**

(509) 575-2490

15 West Yakima Avenue, Suite 200

Yakima, Washington 98902-3401

Well Drilling Coordinator

Gene Potts

(509) 575-2639

Water Rights Coordinator

Carol Mortenson

(509) 454-4256

**Eastern Regional Office**

(509) 329-3400

N. 4601 Monroe, Suite 100

Spokane, Washington 99205-1295

Well Drilling Coordinator

Mark Ader

(509) 329-3544

Water Rights Coordinatiior

Karen Tusa

(509) 329-3585

**County Delegation Contacts:**

Bremerton-Kitsap	Bill Lum	(360) 337-5221
Clark	Paul Greenwalt, Joe Ellingson	(360) 397-8428
Cowlitz	Melissa Sutton, Cynthia Johnson	(360)557-3052 ext. 2667, 2676
Jefferson	Linda Adkins	(360) 385-9444
King	Steve Koppelman	(206) 269-9773
Kittitas	Holly Duncan	(509) 962-7580
Mason	Stephanie Kenney	(360) 427-9670 ext. 297
San Juan	Mark Tompkins	(360) 378-4474
Skagit	Corinne Story	(360) 336-9380
Skamania	Bruce Scherling	(509) 427-5138
Snohomish	Kevin Plemel	(425) 339-5250
Spokane	Jim Sackville-West	(509) 324-1459
Tacoma-Pierce	Rich Dickerson	(253) 789-2885
Thurston	Heather Saunders	(360) 754-2963
Whatcom	Sarah Cierebiej	(360) 676-6724

**For more information:**

Online visit: [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html) – click on wells

See WAC 173-160

To leave a recorded message,  
call 1-800-468-0261.

Dept. of Ecology, Headquarters  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504

**Bellingham**

Field Office  
1204 Railroad Ave, #200  
Bellingham WA 98225

**Bellevue**

Northwest Region Office  
3190 – 160th Ave. SE  
Bellevue WA 98008  
(425) 649-7000

**Olympia**

Southwest Region Office  
PO Box 47775  
Olympia WA 98504  
(360) 407-6300

**Vancouver**

Field Office  
2108 Grand Blvd.  
Vancouver WA 98661  
(360) 690-7171

**Yakima**

Central Region Office  
15 W Yakima Ave, #200  
Yakima WA 98902  
(360) 575-2490

**Spokane**

Eastern Region Office  
N. 4601 Monroe, #202  
Spokane WA 99205  
(509) 329-3400

Washington State Department of Ecology  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia WA 98504-7600

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# Wells Caps

## Problems and Solutions

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April 2003 Revised  
Publication No. 96-BR-098

## WELL CAPS

Wells are drilled to serve different purposes: exploration, sampling, monitoring and extraction. Over half of this country's rural residents use wells to supply their drinking water. In this state alone, over 8,000 water wells are drilled annually.

We should all take responsibility to ensure that ground water is protected and preserved every time a well is constructed. One simple way to protect ground water is to cap wells securely, both during and after construction.

### Here is what Washington's Well Construction Code states about capping wells:

*"All wells which are not in use, or are temporarily out of service, must be securely capped so that no contamination can enter the well. Capping must be affixed by solid welds or equal to prevent unauthorized access to the well."* Washington Administrative Code 173-160.

Well capping is one aspect of this state's well construction standards that Ecology's inspectors look for, and something that both homeowners and drillers should take seriously. A proper cap will help ensure your family's safety and is instrumental in making sure that contamination doesn't enter a well from the top.

### What does Ecology look for in a well cap?

Two common methods of capping wells are:

- 1) The use of prefabricated well caps and
- 2) The use of metal plates welded to the top of the well casing.

Both methods are acceptable, on the condition that they are securely affixed and prevent contamination and unauthorized access to the well. All prefabricated well caps should have a screened vent.

Occasionally Ecology's inspectors find a welded plate or an overturned bucket used to cover the well casing. These are not acceptable methods of capping a well, because they do not meet the standards discussed in the code.

### Where can I buy prefabricated well caps?

These caps can be supplied by your driller or purchased at pump and water supply stores.

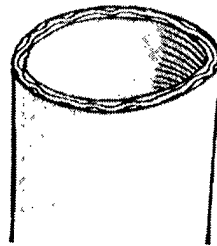
### Do your part in keeping ground water supplies safe and clean!

For more information on well cap standards see WAC 173-160.

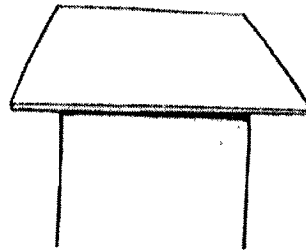
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#### Correct steps in capping a well temporarily:

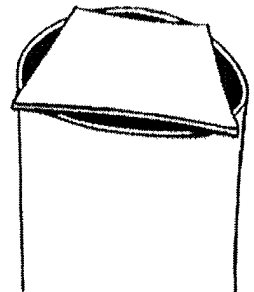
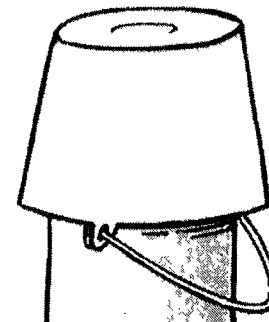
Step 1.  
If jagged, cut top of pipe casing off.



Step 2.  
Securely weld lid onto pipe casing.



#### Capping methods that don't meet state standards:







# Focus on Complying with Washington's Well Drilling Regulations

For Well Operators

Water Resources Program

## For more information:

Online visit:  
[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html)  
– click on wells

To leave a recorded message, call  
1-800-468-0261.

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**Spokane**  
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N. 4601 Monroe, #202  
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Ecology's goal is to serve the people of Washington State and to protect the environment. Sometimes, this places us in the role of enforcer of laws and regulations. The goal of enforcement is to help achieve compliance, not punish violators.

When we discover violations, we want to communicate those findings and clearly state what responses are appropriate. Often Ecology does this informally with a phone call, site visit or written notice. This is to identify a potential violation and outline steps to achieve compliance. Ecology may also use a *Notice of Correction*.

**Notice of Correction: an informal notice of a potential violation, typically with needed corrections noted. Please read carefully the dates outlined in the Notice.**

Ecology may issue an *Administrative Order* rather than (or after) a Notice of Correction when the violation is considered serious and prompt action is needed, or when voluntary compliance has not been achieved.

**Administrative Order: a formal requirement to correct a documented violation. An order may be appealed.**

Ecology may issue a *Notice of Penalty*. Penalties are typically issued for serious or repeated violations.

**Notice of Penalty: a formal notice used to impose a monetary fine for a documented violation. A penalty may also be appealed.**

Here are some tips about working with Ecology toward voluntary compliance:

1. **Do** talk to Ecology before problems develop. If you are wondering whether there is a compliance problem, ask us! We are happy to provide assistance to help people operate within the law, stay in business, and protect the environment.
2. **Do** respond when Ecology uses informal methods to encourage compliance. Often the department is seeking historic or background information that will allow us to help find solutions such as proper well construction, permits or other written approvals. Your efforts are taken into consideration when we are trying to decide an appropriate response to a violation.
3. **Do** read any notice Ecology provides to see what we have decided, and what must be done to correct the problem.



4. **Do** contact Ecology as soon as possible to talk about the findings. Ecology's regional offices are listed on the sidebar on page one.
5. **Do** look at the time you are required to respond. If you cannot respond by then, contact Ecology right away. You must request time extensions in writing and provide good reasons for them.
6. **Do** be aware of the contents of your permit and/or license. It is your responsibility to follow the provisions.

#### **What if I don't agree with Ecology's findings?**

Orders and penalties can be appealed to the Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB). Procedures for appealing are provided in the order or penalty document.

Remember, you can also request Ecology to reconsider a penalty based on new information you provide, prior to a formal appeal.

Ecology wants to work with you to help correct problems before they impact human health or the environment.

**For more information:**

Online visit: [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html) – click on wells

See WAC 173-160

To leave a recorded message,  
call 1-800-468-0261.

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# Request for Variance

## Problems and Solutions

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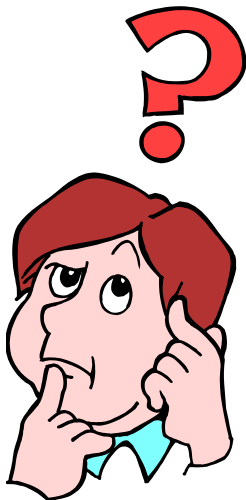
April 2003 Revised  
Publication No. 96-BR-107

## REQUEST FOR A VARIANCE

### Getting permission to use a pre-approved alternative method of well construction.

What if I can't meet the minimum construction standards for my well?  
What if I need to locate my well near a source of contamination? Can I come up with an alternate solution to the state regulations?

It is the responsibility of both the property owner and the driller to follow the well drilling code. In some cases, special circumstances require that other solutions be explored on a case-by-case basis. In those instances, a person may apply to the Department of Ecology for a **variance**. A variance must be requested **prior to drilling the well**.



*A variance is written permission to use a pre-approved alternative method of well construction.*

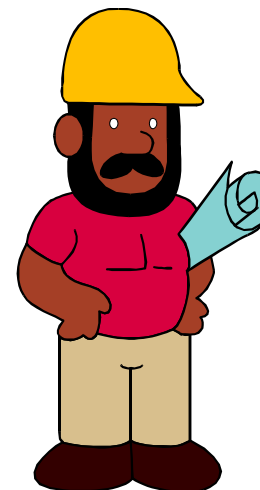
Ecology will evaluate your variance request and your proposed alternative drilling method. A variance may be approved if a plan is offered that assures adequate protection to public health and the environment. If Ecology denies a variance, the applicant may appeal Ecology's decision to the Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB).

### What are the most common types of variance requests?

Typically Ecology is asked to approve locating an individual domestic well less than 100 feet from a septic drainfield, or closer than 1,000 feet to a landfill or some other potential source of contamination. Another typical variance request is to allow a different decommissioning technique.

## How do I request a variance?

Each variance request is handled on a case-by-case basis. The specific information needed is dependent on the type of variance requested. In some cases we may not be allowed to grant a variance regardless of the circumstances. Therefore, you should contact the regional Well Drilling Coordinator in the nearest regional office before you start construction of your well. Variance requests are typically handled through a licensed driller.



For more information on siting (locating your well) and variance requirements, see WAC 173-160.

**For more information:**

Online visit: [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html) – click on wells

To leave a recorded message,  
call 1-800-468-0261.

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See WAC 173-160.

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# Abandoned Wells

## Problems and Solutions

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Publication No. SHWR-BR-96-97

## ABANDONED WELLS

**It is not uncommon in Washington State to find old wells which are no longer in use. These are called “abandoned wells.”**

The most dangerous type of abandoned well is the shallow dug type. Properly closing these and any other wells is called decommissioning. Abandoned wells can pose safety and environmental problems, and are required to be properly decommissioned as soon as possible. There are several ways to decommission a well. The state has written minimum decommissioning standards printed in chapter 173-160 WAC.

### **What are the specific dangers that abandoned wells pose?**



Perhaps the greatest danger associated with abandoned wells is injury or death of people and animals that fall into the well.

Abandoned wells also act as direct conduits, or paths, for contaminants to reach ground water. Contaminants entering the ground water through the well may harm the quality of your drinking water, or the drinking water of your neighbors.

Washington law holds the landowner responsible for decommissioning (properly closing) wells, and therefore liable for any occurrence of contamination.

### **How do I find abandoned wells?**

Knowing the history of the property may help you determine where to look for abandoned wells. It is not uncommon to find as many as three or four wells on some properties.



Since the history is not always known, here are some general tips you may follow when looking for abandoned wells:

- Pipes sticking out of the ground
- Old well houses
- Depressions in the earth
- Concrete vaults, pits, or tile
- Old plywood lying on the ground or over concrete tile or vaults

Also, wells were often constructed in basements of houses, under porch steps, or near cisterns and windmills. Remember, abandoned wells may no longer contain water, but may still pose safety and/or environmental problems.

### **What should I do when I decide to close down a well?**

You will need to contact a licensed well driller to decommission a well. Washington law requires decommissioning of all wells by a licensed driller. A licensed driller will have experience with well construction and decommissioning materials and methods, as well as knowledge of the local geology to safely and properly close a well. Costs to decommission wells will vary depending upon the depth, diameter and geology of the area. Special equipment may be required to remove old pumps and pipes from the well.

You will need to submit a “Notice of Intent to Decommission a Well” to the Department of Ecology at least 72 hours in advance of the work. There is no fee associated with this form. Check with your local county offices to see if there are any other special requirements.



For more information on decommissioning standards, see WAC 173-160.



# Questions & Answers

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## Well Drilling Fees

**Q.** *When is a fee required to drill a well in Washington State?*

**A.** Each year, about 10,000 water wells and 6,000 resource protection wells are constructed in Washington, each requiring a fee to be paid by the property owner. These fees are used to administer the state's well construction and licensing program; to pay for technical assistance to the public and drillers; to administer the state's inspection, education and training programs; and to award grants to local governments for well construction activities. The fee is due at the same time that the state is given notice of an intention to begin well drilling work, or at least 72 hours before work on the well is started. There is no fee for decommissioning wells or for construction of a geotechnical soil boring, though prior notice is still required. In an emergency, such as a failing well, the department allows verbal notice, but the notification form and fee must be sent to Ecology within 24 hours.

**Q.** *What are the fees for water wells?*

**A.** The fee for one water well, other than a dewatering well, with a top casing diameter of less than twelve inches is \$100, or \$200 if the top casing diameter is twelve inches or greater. The combined fee for construction and decommissioning of a dewatering well system is \$40.00 for each two hundred horizontal lineal feet, or portion of lineal feet. Again, there is no fee for decommissioning a well.

**Q.** *Do I owe another fee if I drill a well, but don't find water?*

**A.** If a first attempt at drilling results in a dry hole, there is no additional fee for a second attempt provided that: **1)** The second drilling attempt is made immediately, while the drill rig is still on site; **2)** The unusable well, or dry hole, must be properly decommissioned before the driller leaves the well site; and **3)** Well reports describing all the construction and decommissioning activities are submitted as required.

This regulation is intended to help a property owner and driller if more than one attempt is necessary to find water, but the unusable well must be decommissioned so that only one well is left on the site. All drilling work must take place before the well drilling equipment leaves the site. This regulation does not apply to follow-up construction work after the drilling equipment has left the drill site, such as deepening a well or installing more casing. In that instance, a new notice of intent and fee is required.

**Q.** *What are the fees for resource protection wells?*

**A.** A \$40 fee per well is required with each notice of intent to construct or reconstruct a resource protection well. Geotechnical soil borings are exempt from fees.

It is typical to drill more than one resource protection well on one site. In that instance, a driller may use one notification form to list multiple wells, or geotechnical soil borings, drilled within the same quarter/quarter section, township, and range.

Sometimes after a notice has been submitted, it becomes necessary to construct more resource protection wells, or geotechnical soil borings, than planned because of conditions found at the site. When this happens, a second notice and fee must be submitted within 24 hours after all wells have been completed, or as soon as the final number of wells to be constructed is determined.

Example: Six resource protection wells are identified on one notice of intent. This notice must be submitted at least 72 hours in advance of drilling with a \$240.00 fee. At the job site, eight wells are actually constructed. A second notice must be submitted within 24 hours, identifying two more wells with an additional \$80.00 fee.

***Q.*** *Can I request a refund if my plans change and a well is not drilled?*

***A.*** If your plans change, a written request for a refund can be made on a form provided by Ecology. The request must come from the person who submitted the fee. A refund request can be made no later than 12 months after the department originally received the fee. A copy of the notice of intent receipt must accompany the refund request, and a reason why the well was not constructed must be provided.

#### **For More Information**

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<b>Northwest Regional Office</b>	3190 - 160th Avenue SE Bellevue, WA 98008-5452	(425) 649-7000 TDD (425) 649-4259
<b>Southwest Regional Office</b>	P.O. Box 47775 Olympia, WA 98504-7775	(360) 407-6300 TDD (360) 407-6306
<b>Eastern Regional Office N.</b>	4601 Monroe, Suite 202 Spokane, WA 99205-1295	(509) 456-2926 TDD (509) 458-2055
<b>Central Regional Office</b>	15 W. Yakima Ave., Suite. 200 Yakima, WA 98902-3401	(509) 575-2597 TDD (509) 454-7673
<b>Vancouver Field Office</b>	2108 Grand Boulevard Vancouver, WA 98661-4622	(360) 690-7171 TDD (360) 690-7147
<b>Nooksack Field Office</b>	1204 Railroad Avenue, Suite 200 Bellingham, WA 98225	(360) 738-6250

This document can be accessed through Ecology's home page on the World Wide Web. The address is:  
<http://www.wa.gov/ecology/>

*If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in an alternative format, please contact Paula Smith at (360) 407-6607 (Voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).*





# Focus on Well Tagging Requirements

For Well Operators & Homeowners

Water Resources Program

## For more information:

Online visit:  
[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrhome.html)  
– click on wells

To leave a recorded message, call  
1-800-468-0261.

Dept. of Ecology, HQ  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504  
(360) 407-6650

**Bellingham**  
Field Office  
1204 Railroad Ave, #200  
Bellingham WA 98225

**Bellevue**  
Northwest Region Office  
3190 – 160th Ave. SE  
Bellevue WA 98008  
(425) 649-7000

**Olympia**  
Southwest Region Office  
PO Box 47775  
Olympia WA 98504  
(360) 407-6300

**Vancouver**  
Field Office  
2108 Grand Blvd.  
Vancouver WA 98661  
(360) 690-7171

**Yakima**  
Central Region Office  
15 W Yakima Ave, #200  
Yakima WA 98902  
(360) 575-2490

**Spokane**  
Eastern Region Office  
N. 4601 Monroe, #202  
Spokane WA 99205  
(509) 329-3400

## Background information

The Department of Ecology's well identification program is designed to identify both newly constructed and existing wells. Licensed drillers in Washington State are required to tag all new or reconstructed wells. It is also the homeowner's responsibility to place a well identification tag on every well they own.

Before the well tagging program went into effect, it was difficult for the public to collect or maintain records for their wells, because there was no way of connecting existing records to a particular well. Often, this information is needed when a property is bought or sold. Property owners also may need to collect and maintain data on their wells for water quality protection and water use. Many agencies and organizations also collect, store, and maintain data from wells. This information includes geologic data, static water levels, bacterial analysis, and contaminant tracking.

The well identification program creates a standard (shared) system to uniquely identify wells so that property owners and various agencies can readily share well data. The program also allows homeowners to maintain records for their wells in Ecology's regional offices. In addition, well tags help provide field identification when Ecology staff are trying to locate an individual well.

## General instructions relating to well tagging

Well identification tags are made of rigid aluminum, each containing a six-character identification number, much like a license plate. In most cases, the tag is affixed by strapping it to a well casing (six inches or larger) using a radiator clamp or stainless steel strap. The well identification tag should be placed in a readily visible, reasonably permanent location. Whenever possible, it should not be subject to removal or damage during service to the well or pump. If the well has no exposed casing, or it is difficult to access, attach the tag to the most permanent feature of the well, such as a nearby post, the well house, or the concrete pad at the wellhead.



This is an example of a well tag banded to the casing with a stainless steel strap.

## **Documenting well identification numbers**

Ecology's *Water Well Report* and *Resource Protection Well Report* forms have a space for the well identification number. If older forms are used, please write the well identification number in the upper right hand corner. These forms are available at Ecology's regional offices (see sidebar on page one) and are typically filled out by the well driller. The driller submits the appropriate form to Ecology's regional office well drilling coordinator in the area where the well is located. Drillers may also present the well owner with a form letter that explains the well identification program, along with their copy of the well report.

Homeowners tagging their own wells are required to locate the *Water Well Report* or *Resource Protection Well Report* form for their well(s). If no Water Well Report exists for your well(s), contact the Ecology Headquarters office (online or 1-800 number--see sidebar on page one) to find out what steps you can take in getting a report made on your well(s). The homeowner will then affix the tag they request from Ecology and fill out a Well Tagging Form. The Well Tagging Form is available at Ecology's headquarters office. The Form provides Ecology with information about the well description and location.

When decommissioning, or closing down an old well, a well driller is required to remove the well identification tag and attach it to the *Decommissioning Well Report* before sending the form to Ecology.

## **Important things to remember**

- Never compromise the integrity of the well seal when attaching the identification tag.
- Write the well identification number on all pertinent forms, using the space provided, if there is one. For example, homeowners should reference the well identification number on their water quality lab reports.
- Make sure to write the full well identification number on all forms.

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*If you require this publication in an alternative format, please contact (360) 407-6600 (voice) or (TTY) at 711 or 1-800-833-6388.*